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Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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S E C R E T CAIRO 11526

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, EG, KN, KS
SUBJECT: FAHMY ON KOREA

SUMMARY: ACKNOWLEDGING CONTINUED GOE SUPPORT FOR NORTH KOREA AT COLOMBO, FAHMY WAS SHARPLY CRITICAL OF USG POSITION ON KOREA. NORTH KOREANS "DECENT PEOPLE" AND USG IS MAKING MISTAKE BY NOT BEING WILLING TALK WITH THEM. USG RUNS DANGER THAT KOREAN RESENTMENT AGAINST US WILL GROW EVEN IN SOUTH KOREA AND EVENTUALLY BACKFIRE AS WITH SOUTH VIETNAM. EVEN SOME SOUTH KOREANS HAD EXPRESSED CONCERN TO HIM ABOUT OVER-POWERING USG ROLE IN THEIR COUNTRY. HE WAS WORRIED THAT USG ACTIONS IN WAKE OF PANMUNJON INCIDENT ARE FOR ELECTION BENEFIT. THIS COULD BE SERIOUS SINCE NORTH KOREANS WELL PREPARED. I STRONGLY RUFUTED FAHMY'S CONTENTION AND TOLD HIM HE WAS ABSOLUTELY WRONG IN HIS ESTIMATE. WE HAVE LONG URGED RESUMPTION OF SOUTH/NORTH DIALOGUE AND HAVE SHOWN CON-SEDERABLE FLEXIBILITY IN SEARCHING FOR WAYS TO DEFUSE KOREAN SITUATION. FAHMY SAID GOE IS TRYING TO "MEDIATE" BETWEEN SOUTH AND NORTH KOREA TO ARRANGE FOR RESUMPTION OF DIALOGUE. ROK ALREADY HAS INDICATED WILLINGNESS AND HE WAS SURE DPRK WILL DO LIKEWISE. HE EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT USG MIGHT TRY TO DISRUPT THIS EFFORT AND URGED THAT WE NOT DO SO. END SUMMARY.

1. IN ALEXANDRIA YESTERDAY, FAHMY GAVE ME HIS VERSION OF THE COLOMBO NAM CONFERENCE (SEPTEL). HE STATED QUITE FRANKLY
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THAT GOE HAS IN THE PAST SUPPORTED THE NORTHE KOREAN POSITION

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AND HAD AGAIN DONE SO. FAHMY NOTED HE HAD SEEN SOUTH KOREAN CONSUL GENERAL CHANG JUST BEFORE I ARRIVED AND EXPECTED TO MEET WITH THE DPRK AMBASSADOR TODAY. I RECALLED CHANG HAD MENTIONED TO CORE GROUP FAHMY'S OFFER TO MEDIATE BETWEEN NORTHE AND SOUTH KOREA AND ASKED HOW THIS IDEA HAD PROGRESSED. FAHMY SEEMED LOATH TO COMMENT, SIMPLY SAYING ANY EGYPTIAN MEDIATION EFFORTS SHOULD BE OF NO CONCERN TO US. LATER IN CONVERSATION IT DEVELOPED THAT HE IS CONCERNED WE MAY TRY TO DISRUPT SUCH EFFORTS.

2. FAHMY WAS SHARPLY CRITICAL OF THE USG POSITION ON KOREA. HE DESCRIBED THE NORTH KOREANS AS "DECENT PEOPLE", AND INSISTED USG IS MAKING A MISTAKE BY NOT BEING WILLING TO TALK WITH THEM. IF USG CONTINUES AS AT PRESENT, KOREAN RESENTMENT AGAINST US WILL GROW, EVEN IN SOUTH KOREA, AND WILL EVENTUALLY BACKFIRE AS WAS THE CASE WITH SOUTH VIETNAM.

3. FAHMY CLAIMED "SOME PEOPLE" (UNIDENTIFIED) FROM SOUTH KOREA HAD EXPRESSED CONCERN TO HIM ABOUT OVERPOWERING US POSITION IN KOREA. WHILE ACKNOWLEDGING USG HAS BEEN A GOOD FRIEND, THEY HAD COMPLAINED IT IS "ALWAYS THINKING FROM HIGH ABOVE." IT HAS BEEN SEEKING TO CREATE A CLEAN, INDUSTRIAL SOUTH KOREA, BUT SOUTH KOREANS-SO FAHMY'S INFOMANTS ALLEGEDLY CHARGED-HAVE LITTLE VOICE IN ANY OF THIS.

4. FAHMY ALSO EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT PRESENT KOREAN CRISIS. HE OPINED THAT HEIGHTENED ALERT OF US FORCES AND NAVAL DEPLOY-MENT AFTER PANMUNJON INCIDENT SUGGESTS WE ARE SEEKING "PLAY KOREA" FOR ELECTION BENEFITS. THIS, HE CONTENDED, IS BAD AND DANGEROUS. IT COULD GET "OUT OF BOUNDS." IT IS ONE THING TO ATTACK NORTH KOREA IN PUBLIC MEDIA, BUT WE SHOULD AVOID GETTING MILITARILY INVOLVED. DOING SO WILL BE SERIOUS. THE NORTH KOREANS ARE WELL PREPARED, AS GAMASY HAD REPORTED AFTER HIS RECENT TRIP THERE.

5. I TOLD FAHMY I WAS ASTONISHED AT HIS COMMENTS. HE WAS ABSOLUTELY WRONG IN HIS ESTIMATE. WE HAVE NOT SOUGHT TO ESCALATE THE KOREAN INCIDENT. I COULD NOT RECONCILE HIS STATEMENT ABOUT THE NORTH KOREANS BEING SUCH "DECENT PEOPLE" WITH THEIR RECENT UNPROVOKED KILLING OF TWO AMERICAN OFFICERS IN THE DMZ OR WITH THEIR TUNNELING ACTIVITIES INTO SOUTH KOREA OR WITH OTHER

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HARASSING TACTICS. AS FOR SEEKING TO USE THE KOREAN INCIDENT FOR ELECTION PURPOSES, HE SIMPLY DID NOT KNOW WHAT HE WAS TALKING ABOUT.

6. RATHER LAMELY, FAHMY SAID NORTH KOREAN ACTIONS LIKE PANMUNJON AND TUNNELING ARE SUMPLY "THE ORIENTAL WAY" AND WE SHOULD NOT ASCRIBE TOO MUCH INPORTANCE TO THEM. I SAID I COULD NOT AGREE. AS HE SHOULD KNOW, WE HAVE LONG URGED A RESUMPTION OF

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THE SOUTH/NORTH DIALOGUE, WHICH THE NORTH KOREANS BROKE OFF.
AS HE ALSO KNEW, WE HAVE SHOWN CONSIDERABL FLEXIBILITY IN SEARCH-
ING FOR WAYS TO DEFUSE THE KOREAN SITUATION, BUT WE HAD NO
NORTH KOREAN RESPONSE. I COULD NOT ACCEPT HIS ALLEGATIONS THAT
WE ARE AT FAULT AND COULD ONLY URGE ONCE MORE THAT HE RECONSIDER
GOE POSITION AND WORK FOR A PEACEFUL SETTLEMTN.

7. FAHMY RESPONDED GOE IS TRYING TO DO SO. HE THEN ACKNOWLEDGED
THAT HE IS TRYING TO "MEDIATE" BETWEEN SOUTH AND NORTH KOREA
TO ARRANGE FOR A RESUMPTION OF THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE TWO.
CONGEN CHANG HAD JUST INDICATED ROK'S WILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT
EGYPTIAN MEDIATION. ASKED ABOUT NORTH KOREAN RESPONSE, FAHMY
SAID HE WOULD BE TALKING TO DPRK AMB TODAY. HOWEVER, HE WAS NOT
WORRIED ABOUT KIM IL SUNG'S RESPONSE. GOE KNOWS NORTH KOREANS
AND IS CONVINCED THEY WANT A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT. FAHMY
EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT USG WILL TRY TO DISRUPT ANY SUCH EGYPTIAN
MEDIATION EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH A DIALOGUE BY "FILIBUSTERING"
IN SEOUL OR IN OTHER WAYS. IF WE REALLY WANT A PEACEFUL SETTLE-
MENT FAHMY ARGUED, WE SHOULD ACTIVELY SUPPORT GOE'S EFFORTS. I
TOLD HIM OUR DESIRE FOR A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT IN KOREA IS WELL
ATTESTED AND HE MORE THAN MOST OUGHT TO BE AWARE OF THIS FACT.
FAHMY CONTINUED TO GRUMBLE THAT WE MIGHT TRY TO DISRUPT
EGYPTIAN MEDIATION EFFORTS.

8. COMMENT: GOE POSITION ON KOREAN ISSUE HAS NOT CHANGED AND
IS BASED ON CONSIDERATIONS, INCLUDING NORTH KOREAN MILITARY
ASSISTANCE, ALREADY REPORTED. WE HAVE NOTED THAT SHORTLY BEFORE
COLOMBO CONFERENCE, NORTH KOREA SOLD GOE EQUIPMENT FOR SEVERAL
BRIGADES OF ARTILLERY (FIRDB-312/02315-76, JULY 29). I DO
NOT KNOW EXTENT OF WHICH SOUTH KOREAN CONGEN COMMITTED ROK
TO EGYPTIAN MEDIATION, AS FAHMY CLAIMS, BUT HOPE TO SEE CHANG
IN THE NEXT DAY OR TWO TO GET A READING FROM HIM. MEANWHILE,
WOULD APPRECIATE INSTRUCTIONS WHAT I SHOULD TELL FAHMY ABOUT
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OUR VIEWS ON EGYPTIAN MEDIATION EFFORTS.

9. HAVE JUST RECEIVED STATE 211862. APART FROM FAHMY'S
COMMENTS REPORTED ABOVE, ONLY PRESS REACTION WE HAVE SEEN
THUS FAR IS THAT REPORTED CAIRO 11437. EGYPTIANS HAVE CONCERNS
OF THEIR OWN AND FOR MOST PANMUNJON INCIDENT IS NOT ONE OF
THEM.EILTS

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